Patristics and Catholic Social Thought
In *Tertio millennio adveniente*, Pope John Paul II poses a hard question: “It must be asked how many Christians really know and put into practice the principles of the church’s social doctrine.” The American Catholic bishops share the pope’s concern: “Catholic social teaching is a central and essential element of our faith . . . [and yet] our social heritage is unknown by many Catholics. Sadly, our social doctrine is not shared or taught in a consistent and comprehensive way in too many of our schools.” This lack is critical because the “sharing of our social tradition is a defining measure of Catholic education and formation.” A United States Catholic Conference task force on social teaching and education noted that within Catholic higher education “there appears to be little consistent attention given to incorporating gospel values and Catholic social teaching into general education courses or into departmental majors.”

In response to this problem, the volumes in the Catholic Social Tradition series aspire to impart the best of what this tradition has to offer not only to Catholics but to all who face the social issues of our times. The volumes examine a wide variety of issues and problems within the Catholic social tradition and contemporary society, yet they share several characteristics. They are theologically and philosophically grounded, examining the deep structure of thought in modern culture. They are publicly argued, enhancing dialogue with other religious and nonreligious traditions. They are comprehensively engaged by a wide variety of disciplines such as theology, philosophy, political science, economics, history, law, management, and finance. Finally, they examine how the Catholic social tradition can be integrated on a practical level and embodied in institutions in which people live much of their lives. The Catholic Social Tradition series is about faith in action in daily life, providing ways of thinking and acting to those seeking a more humane world.

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PATRISTICS
and Catholic Social Thought

Hermeneutical Models for a Dialogue

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For Heidi
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